

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02782 101548Z
ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-07 ISO-00 AID-01 SS-07 NSC-06 /025 W
-----110242Z 020438 /70

R 101337Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4274
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2782

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (HAMILTON, LEE)
SUBJECT: CODEL HAMILTON

REF: STATE 127737

1. BEIRUT WELCOMES PROPOSED CODEL HAMILTON VISIT. WE WISH INSURE ALL CONCERNED ARE AWARE, HOWEVER, OF POTENTIAL FOR MISUNDERSTANDING ARISING FROM CONJUNCTION BETWEEN MEETING WITH PLO AND FLIGHT IN AND OUT OF BEIRUT BY USAF AIRCRAFT. CONSPICUOUS PRESENCE OF US MILITARY AIRCRAFT ON TARMAC DURING VISIT LIKELY BE CONSTRUED BY ARABS AS INDICATION OF SHIFT IN OFFICIAL USG ATTITUDE, EVEN THOUGH OTHER US CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS HAVE MET PLO REPRESENTATIVES IN BEIRUT IN PAST. AIRCRAFT WILL MEAN TO THEM THAT AN OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH USG HAS OCCURRED. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, WELCOME SUCH A SHIFT, BUT WONDER WHETHER CODEL WISHES TO TRANSMIT THAT PARTICULAR SIGNAL. MY SECURITY OFFICER ALSO FEELS THERE IS INCREASED SECURITY RISK WITH USE OF USAF AIRCRAFT, BUT I BELIEVE PLO SPONSORSHIP OF VISIT PROBABLY OFFSETS RISK.
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2. ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE TO COME BY ROAD (TWO HOURS EACH WAY) OR USE COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS IN AND OUT. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT THERE EXIST AT PRESENT NO DIRECT COMMERCIAL DAMASCUS-BEIRUT FLIGHTS (OTHER THAN AN AUSTRIAN AIRLINES FLIGHT FROM VIENNA TO BEIRUT, WHICH STOPS EN ROUTE IN DAMASCUS, BUT DEPARTS TO ANOTHER LOCATION). HOWEVER, DIRECT FLIGHTS ARE

POSSIBLE FROM CAIRO AND AMMAN. GROUP MIGHT, FOR INSTANCE, COME HERE FROM CAIRO VIA COMMERCIAL FLIGHT AND THEN GO ON TO DAMASCUS BY CAR.

3. HOWEVER, CODEL COMES, EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS CODEL MAKING ITS OWN ARRANGEMENTS ABOUT MEETING PLO, INCLUDING GROUND TRANSPORTATION TO RENDEZVOUS. AS WE UNDERSTAND CURRENT USG POLICY, EMBASSY CANNOT INVOLVE ITSELF. THIS WILL POSE COORDINATION PROBLEMS BUT BELIEVE THEY SURMOUNTABLE. DO NOT BELIEVE, FOR INSTANCE, THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR PLO TO PICK CODEL UP AT AIRPORT OR PRESIDENCY AND SOME NEUTRAL SPOT, SUCH AS HOTEL, NEEDS TO BE USED AS PICKUP AND DELIVERY POINT. SUGGEST HOTEL CARLTON AS MOST CONVENIENT.

4. REFTTEL VAGUE AS TO HOW MUCH TIME CODEL PLANS SPEND IN BEIRUT. PARA 6 PERHAPS WAS INTENDED TO MEAN THEY PLANNING COME HERE AND RETURN TO DAMASCUS SAME AFTERNOON OR SAME MORNING, BUT DOES NOT IN FACT SAY SO. THIS IS GOING TO BE REAL STRAIN, PARTICULARLY IF TRIP MADE BY CAR. SUGGEST THAT IF DAMASCUS-BEIRUT SEQUENCE IMMUTABLE, EVERYONE'S LIVERS AND OUTLOOK WOULD BE MUCH IMPROVED BY ENTIRE PARTY COMING BEIRUT MORNING OF JULY 10 AND PROCEEDING FROM HERE DIRECTLY TO ISRAEL. THIS WOULD INVOLVE EITHER COMMERCIAL FLIGHT TO CYPRUS OR USE OF USAF AIRCRAFT. AS INDICATED ABOVE, LATTER DOES NOT GIVE US PROBLEMS, BUT CODEL SHOULD REFLECT ON LIKELY IMPACT.

5. WE WILL REQUEST APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS AS SOON AS ITINERARY FIRM.
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PARKER

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